

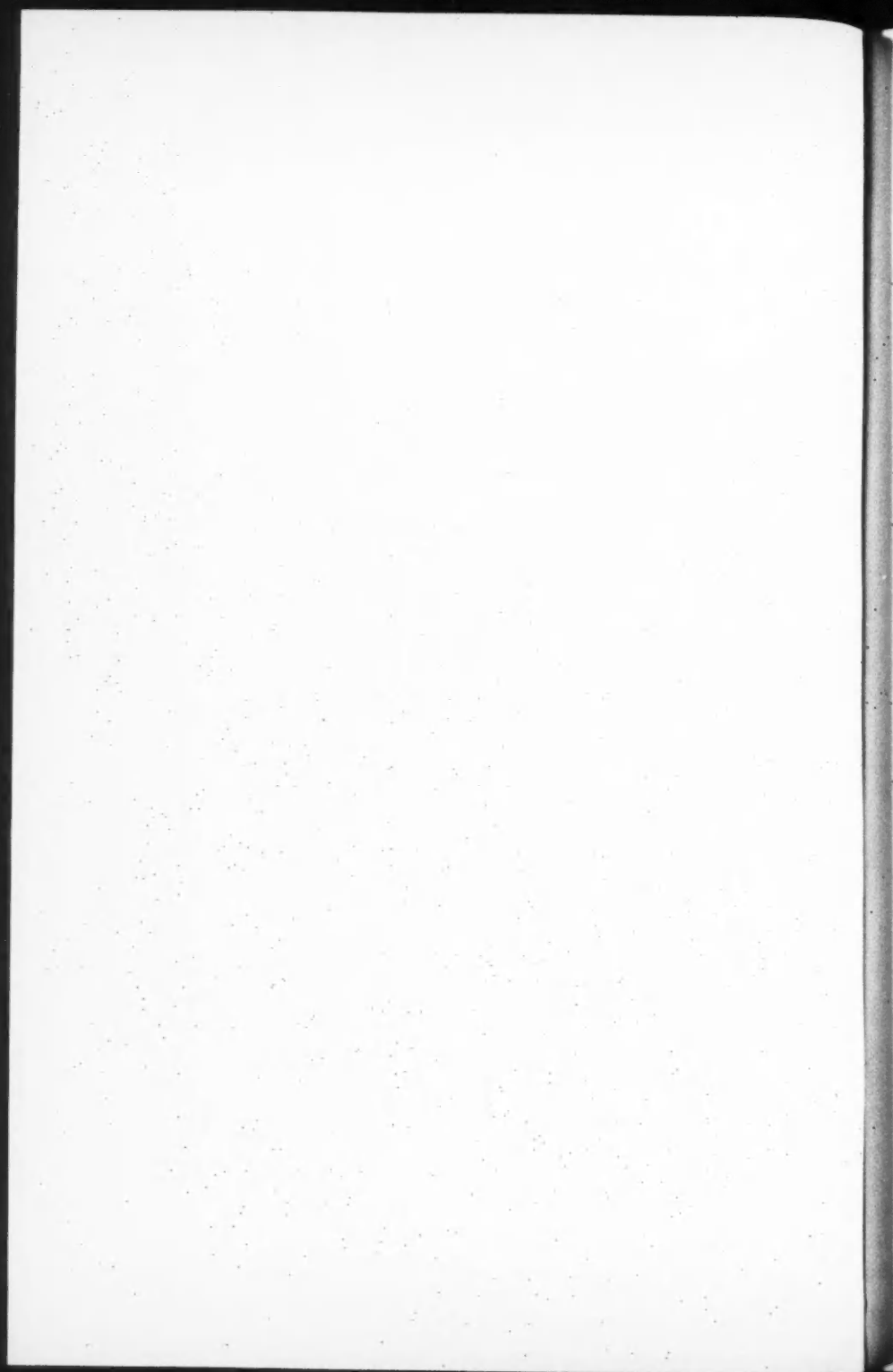
FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY

by

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY

PASSAGE of the National Defense Education Act of (Sept. 2) 1958 may help to ease a critical shortage of accomplished linguists in this country. The new law is unique among general education acts in that it singles out the study of modern foreign languages, along with mathematics and science, for special consideration. The statute's provisions in aid of language instruction were added in recognition of handicaps the United States labors under from neglect of this kind of study. Reports that Russia is rich in linguists with a command not only of the major tongues of Europe but also of languages spoken in key countries of Africa and of Asia bolstered support for the measure.

The United States formerly showed little or no concern over its linguistic shortcomings. Ability on the part of the country's diplomats, for example, to speak the languages of countries to which they were assigned was not considered as important as it is today. Since World War II, however, American inferiority in language skills has become a serious hindrance to smooth conduct of foreign relations. The State Department and the armed services have sought to correct the deficiency by giving intensive language training to selected personnel, but there is still an acute shortage of linguists.

NEW FUNDS FOR TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

It is hoped that funds granted under the new law will give added impetus to a widespread drive to improve and extend language courses in the schools. Resurgent interest in teaching of foreign languages, after decades of relegation to the educational background, is already affecting the content of school programs at all levels from the first grade on up. If the present trend continues, it is expected that within ten years there will be a sizable crop of high school and college graduates who can speak and understand the most widely used foreign languages.

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The U.S. Commissioner of Education, Lawrence G. Derrick, told a meeting of educators recently that the United States had "with good reason been called the most backward major nation in the world" so far as familiarity with foreign languages was concerned.¹ President Eisenhower, outlining proposals for federal aid to education in a special message to Congress last Jan. 27, said:

Knowledge of foreign languages is particularly important today in the light of America's responsibilities of leadership in the free world. And yet the American people generally are deficient in foreign languages, particularly those of the emerging nations in Asia, Africa and the Near East. It is important to our national security that such deficiencies be promptly overcome.

Americans resident abroad or among the large annual crop of travelers to foreign countries number approximately three million,² and relatively few of them are proficient in the language of non-English-speaking countries where they live or to which they travel. The language problem is of long standing and of particular importance for the State Department. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles said recently: "Interpreters are no substitute. It is impossible to understand what is in the minds of other people without understanding their language, and without understanding their language it is impossible to be sure that they understand what is in our mind."³

LANGUAGE DEFICIENCIES IN U.S. FOREIGN SERVICE

A State Department survey of language proficiency among 4,000 Foreign Service officers in 1956 showed that 43 per cent lacked a useful speaking and reading knowledge of any foreign language, and that fully one-half did not have useful proficiency in French, German, or Spanish. Language tests given to nearly 300 otherwise qualified Foreign Service recruits disclosed that only one-fourth had a useful proficiency in any foreign language. Lack of candidates adequately trained in foreign languages has forced the State Department to relax language requirements for admission to the Foreign Service and at the same time to furnish the necessary instruction after hiring.

At a conference with the President on March 18, members of the Advisory Committee of the Foreign Service

¹ Address, National Conference on Higher Education, Chicago, March 5, 1958.

² The total includes 35,000 civilian employees of the federal government; 28,000 persons affiliated with religious organizations; 22,000 representatives of business enterprises; and 15,000 teachers, students, employees of international organizations, etc.

³ Quoted in *Modern Language Journal*, May 1958, p. 228.

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Institute pointed out that Llewellyn E. Thompson at Moscow was the only American ambassador in a Communist country who could speak the language of the nation to which he was posted. The United States is represented at the capitals of many of its partners in the North Atlantic alliance by ambassadors who cannot converse in the language of the country. Only two of its ambassadors in the Middle East—Raymond A. Hare in Egypt and Parker T. Hart in Jordan—speak Arabic. The same situation prevails in numerous other parts of the world, and in some places U.S. representatives have had to depend on native interpreters.⁴

NEED BY SCIENTISTS TO LEARN TO READ RUSSIAN

Need for widespread knowledge of foreign languages is felt by the armed forces as well as the Foreign Service and extends into non-official quarters. The language inadequacies of many American scientists, particularly their inability to read Russian, is said to be a real impediment to scientific progress. Although some 20,000 Soviet scientific reports and journals are received in the United States every year, comparatively few are translated or summarized. Of 1,200 Soviet scientific journals published annually, 200 are of major interest to American scientists, but articles in only 30 of them are translated under government auspices. Morton Hamermesh, who teaches Russian to physicist colleagues at the Argonne National Laboratory, said last March that more technical material was being written in the Russian language today than in any other language except English.

James R. Killian, special assistant to the President for science and technology, on Jan. 31 urged members of the American Institute of Physics to study Russian. Similar recommendations had been put before the House Government Information subcommittee ten days earlier by Wallace R. Brode, science adviser to the Secretary of State, and Hiden T. Cox, executive director of the American Institute of Biological Sciences. Gerhard H. Dieke, chairman of the Department of Physics at Johns Hopkins University, said in an interview on Feb. 2: "Formerly German and French were the great scientific languages. Now Russian has come to the fore."

⁴When the United States sent its own language experts to Indonesia in 1949, it was discovered that native interpreters had colored their translations to "make local comment sound friendly and pro-American."—Jacob Ornstein, "To Win the Language Race With Russia," *New York Times Magazine*, Sept. 15, 1957, p. 49.

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SOVIET SUPERIORITY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE SKILLS

The language deficiencies of American diplomats, scientists, and others contrast sharply with the talents of Russians who go abroad to serve their country. An estimated ten million Russians are studying English today, compared with 8,000 Americans studying Russian.⁵ A recent study of the language problem pointed out:

The evidence of Soviet foreign language study can be found everywhere. Russian technicians entering a new country have been trained in the customs and culture of the nation and have some fluency in the language. Not long ago a Soviet research ship visited the South Pacific port of Rabaul. To the surprise of the natives, three of the Russians who came ashore proved to be experts in speaking pidgin English.⁶

Frederick Burkhardt, president of the American Council of Learned Societies, told the Senate Education Committee last March that scarcely six persons in the United States could read a newspaper in Telegu, the language of 13 million people in India. "But when a Soviet delegation arrives in that country its members can speak and read Telegu."

The Soviet Union's large-scale language training program has been described by a State Department official as "characteristically conceived in long-range terms." It is designed to train experts "not only in every widely spoken language, but also in many obscure languages spoken in the uncommitted areas of the Near East, Far East, and Africa." The language training extends to technicians as well as diplomats. "I understand that in one of the crucial areas of the Near East which has recently been invaded by Russian technicians, it is rare to find a Russian who does not speak the language. In this same area there is only one American official who can handle the language at all."⁷

LANGUAGE TEACHING BY U.S. GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

To meet the demand for individuals who can speak foreign languages, five government agencies—the State Department, Army, Air Force, Navy, and Central Intelligence Agency—operate their own language training schools or contract with educational institutions to provide the in-

⁵ U.S. Office of Education, *Foreign Language Development Program* (January 1958).

⁶ Menahem Mansoor, *Present State of Arabic Studies in the United States* (paper presented at meeting of American Oriental Society, New York, April 1-2, 1958), p. 6.

⁷ Howard E. Solienberger, "Need for Foreign Language Competencies in Government," *Modern Foreign Languages in the High School* (U.S. Office of Education Bulletin, 1958), p. 15.

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struction. Although around 40 different languages are taught in the government-sponsored classes, it has been estimated that there is need for experts in more than 100 languages.

The Foreign Service Act of 1946 created the Foreign Service Institute in the State Department for in-service training of Foreign Service personnel comparable to that given military officers in Army and Navy institutions. Intensive instruction in foreign languages by the Institute has been greatly expanded since 1955.

Last year the State Department required Foreign Service officers to acquire a "useful" knowledge within five years of two foreign languages. Useful knowledge was defined as sufficient grasp of a language to read non-technical news, to carry on ordinary social conversations, to recognize proper names, street signs and office designations, and to read and engage in discussions in the professional field of the officer's specialty.

The Institute reported early this year that it was teaching 25 languages and had tape recordings for use in study of 41 languages. Schools are operated in Washington and abroad. Instruction in European languages is given in France, Germany, and Mexico. Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese are taught in Lebanon, Formosa, and Japan, respectively. The State Department recently expanded its educational program in Russian and such less widely known tongues as Hausa, modern Hebrew, Hindi, Indonesian, Khmer, and Thai. Most of these languages are spoken in Asian or African countries which have recently attained or are about to attain independence. The State Department informed a House Appropriations subcommittee on Jan. 20, 1958: "Many of these countries are adopting their native tongues as their official language. As a result, we can no longer staff posts in these countries with officers who are solely fluent in European languages."

The military services, which carried on extensive language programs during World War II, have continued work in that field. The Army Language School at Monterey, Calif., recently added a 29th language—Burmese—to its curriculum. It has an enrollment of about 2,000 and a faculty of 500; the intensive nature of the instruction requires extremely small study groups. The armed services were ahead of the State Department in instituting large-

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scale instruction in Russian, Japanese, and the languages of Eastern Europe.

Large industrial companies operating abroad often provide language training for employees. The Arabian American Oil Company arranges for instruction in Arabic at several centers in Saudi Arabia; the offerings range from short (50-hour) practical courses, open to employees and their families, to comprehensive courses for those whose positions require fuller mastery of the language. Creole Petroleum Corp., with interests in Venezuela, likewise sponsors language courses for its overseas employees. Standard Oil of New Jersey has a similar program.

Neglect of Language Study In Schools

THE POVERTY of language skills in the United States is a direct consequence of the cavalier treatment accorded language instruction in American schools over the past few decades. Although the schools could scarcely be expected to turn out experts in relatively obscure tongues, their failure to give large numbers of students a grounding in one or more major languages has greatly hampered efforts to train specialists in out-of-the-way tongues.

The head of the State Department's language school asserts that it is easier to teach an adult a foreign language if he already has command of one language in addition to his native tongue. "If a man has had any experience learning a spoken language, one psychological barrier is down. He knows he can learn a language. . . . I would much rather . . . take some person who has learned to speak fluent French and try to teach him Chinese than I would to take an adult who hadn't learned any foreign language and try to teach him Chinese."⁸ Much of the government's intensive language training is in tongues which are generally considered appropriate for study in the nation's schools.

Language instruction today has been criticized on various grounds: (1) The schools don't teach as many languages as they should; (2) not enough students take courses in

⁸ Howard E. Sollenberger, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

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the languages that are taught; (3) the typical two-year course is not long enough to impart a real grasp of the language studied; (4) language training begins too late in the school program; (5) methods of instruction are antiquated and ineffective; (6) many teachers lack oral mastery of the language they teach.

U.S. Education Commissioner Derthick told a House Education subcommittee on Feb. 19, 1958, that "Most Americans who do study languages seem to start too late and stop too soon to become proficient."

Education in this country is not yet preparing Americans effectively to live and serve overseas. There is evident need to improve American school and college curricula to prepare men and women to serve in the whole of the world. . . . We have attempted the impossible by providing only two years on the average in high school or college for learning to understand, speak, read and write a second language. Of the 24 languages of the world, each spoken natively by more than 20 million persons, only Spanish and French are studied by any appreciable proportion of American high school students.

A survey four years ago showed that in the school year 1954-55 no fewer than 56 per cent of the nation's public high schools offered no courses in any modern foreign languages. Only 7 per cent of the total number of children in high school throughout the country were studying Spanish, only 6 per cent French, and less than 1 per cent German. Italian, modern Hebrew, and Polish were offered in a few schools in large cities. Instruction in Russian was then being given to about 400 students in five or six high schools. In several cities classes were offered in Czech, Norwegian, Portuguese, and Swedish; Chinese was being taught experimentally in San Francisco.⁹

Hardly 15 per cent of the high school population, and a not much larger percentage of the nation's three million college students, were studying a foreign language in 1954. Opportunities for such study varied considerably among and within the states. Small high schools with only a few hundred pupils often skipped foreign language study entirely. It was provided in all the high schools of only four states (Connecticut, Maine, New Jersey, Rhode Island), in less than one-half of the high schools of 25 states. The proportion of high school pupils enrolled in a modern language course ranged from a little over 30 per cent in

⁹ Testimony of U.S. Education Commissioner Derthick, House Education subcommittee, Feb. 19, 1958.

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Massachusetts and New York down to about 2 per cent in the Dakotas.¹⁰

The language situation among institutions of higher learning is not much better. According to recent surveys by the Modern Language Association, less than one-third of the 840 institutions offering the B.A. degree have a language requirement for college entrance, although a majority require language study to qualify for the degree.¹¹ In 1913, on the other hand, 89 per cent of the institutions had a uniform modern language requirement for entrance.

Only 17 of 159 graduate schools reporting to the Modern Language Association had a uniform language requirement (usually two years of undergraduate credit) for admission to graduate standing. Languages were usually required by departments of Chemistry, English, and History, but often were not required by departments of Agriculture, Education, and Engineering. Unconcern for language skills in the latter group seems inconsistent with the prevalence of postwar programs for international exchange of agriculturists, teachers and technicians.

Approximately one-third of the colleges and universities had a language requirement for M.A. degree applicants, and such a requirement was almost universal in the case of Ph.D. candidates. Nearly one-half of the institutions granting the Ph.D. degree required a reading knowledge of French and German, and a growing number allowed substitution of another language, such as Russian, for either French or German. However, degree candidates were permitted by some colleges to postpone meeting the language requirement; one of the country's largest universities gave the candidate seven months after completing all other requirements, including writing of the dissertation, to pass the language test.¹²

REASONS FOR SHARP DROP IN STUDY OF LANGUAGES

The decline of modern foreign language study in American schools and colleges was a by-product of the great expansion of enrollments over the past half-century. That expansion led to modification of educational goals in the

¹⁰ "Ten Criticisms of Public Education," *National Education Association Research Bulletin*, December 1957, p. 158.

¹¹ "Foreign Language Entrance and Degree Requirements for the B.A. Degree, Fifth Revision," *PMLA* (Publications of the Modern Language Association of America), September 1957, p. 33.

¹² Claude P. Viers and Philip Wadsworth, "Foreign Language Entrance and Degree Requirements for the M.A., M.S. and Ph.D. Degrees," *PMLA*, September 1957, p. 29.

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direction of the practical needs of everyday living and of vocational preparation. At the beginning of the present century Greek and Latin, as well as French and German, were firmly entrenched in the curriculums of both public and private secondary schools. "It was then accepted in this country . . . that languages were to the educated man the indispensable tool which permitted him on the one hand to return to the classical sources of his cultural heritage and on the other to converse with people who, while speaking other languages, were conscious of sharing the same western civilization."¹³

As high school enrollment grew in succeeding decades, a shrinking percentage of pupils had incentive to study either the ancient classic or the modern foreign languages. College entrance requirements carried less weight in the high schools, and relatively few pupils expected to travel abroad. Educators sought to meet the changed needs of the high school population by introducing a host of new courses, which competed with moribund foreign language courses for space in the curriculum. Post-World War I isolationism encouraged neglect of language study, and colleges began to drop language requirements. German, in particular, suffered as a result of the buffeting it had received from wartime anti-German feeling.

Early in the 1920s a representative group of language teachers, supported by grants from the Carnegie Corporation, undertook a study of language instruction. *Modern Foreign Language Study*, a volume incorporating the findings, recommended in 1929 that instruction in foreign languages aim at developing a reading rather than an oral proficiency. The educators reasoned that this was the only attainable goal in view of the scarcity of pupils who would study a language for more than two years.

The influence of this report was pervasive. Language study in the schools became largely a matter of struggling with rules of grammar, memorizing a vocabulary, and attempting to translate directly from the printed page. The knowledge acquired was so limited that students quickly forgot what they had learned. If study of a language was resumed in college, especially after a lapse of several years, it was usually necessary to go over much of the same ground again.

¹³ Theodore Andersson, *The Teaching of Foreign Languages in the Elementary School* (1953), p. 1.

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The linguistic ineptitude of high school and college graduates, even those who had devoted many hours to formal language study, put further obstacles in the way of language courses. Kenneth W. Mildenberger, director of the Foreign Language Program of the Modern Language Association, told the House Education subcommittee on April 1, 1958, that "A whole generation of educational administrators and theorists has been instilled with skepticism concerning the place of modern foreign languages" in the curriculum. He noted, however, that "Alert professional educators are now revising their views."

DECLINE IN SUPPLY OF WELL-TRAINED INSTRUCTORS

Neglect of modern languages in the schools brought about a decline in the number of college graduates equipped to teach languages and a falling off in the qualifications of those who did take language-teaching posts. Education Commissioner Derthick told the House Education subcommittee on Feb. 5 that "Those who determine policy in our public schools have, on the one hand, effectively objected to foreign language instruction because it is poorly done and achieves little in two years and, on the other hand, have persistently required an insufficient minimum of foreign language training of the teachers actually hired."

In many states high school teachers of a foreign language are required to have a minimum of 225 "contact hours" of language instruction—as compared with 612 or more hours in the wartime "intensive language program." A consequence of this policy is that the language teacher in a second-year high school class has often reached the practical limit of what he himself has been taught. . . . Little wonder that the two-year course has come to be considered terminal in so many high schools.

Even the low standards now prevailing for language teacher certification are often relaxed because of the insufficient supply. A survey of teacher supply and demand by the National Education Association showed that in 32 states only 639 teachers had graduated in 1956 with qualifications to teach language in high schools, and 62 per cent of them went into other fields. Ohio State University received 213 calls for foreign language teachers in 1956 but graduated only 16 foreign language majors that year.

Many language teachers give instruction in several additional subjects. Some of them did not major or even minor in the language they teach. Teachers' colleges are rarely staffed to give anything beyond elementary foreign lan-

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guage instruction, if they teach it at all. The language teacher in America is said to be the victim of 40 years of inadequate facilities and wrong-mindedness in teacher preparation institutions. Derthick said: "Few of them [teachers] speak correctly and fluently the language they teach, for the simple reason that they were never taught to do so; and they have lacked the means to visit the country they are supposed to know all about." It has been estimated that possibly 70 per cent should be re-trained, not only to learn more about the language they teach, but also to learn how to use new techniques and equipment in the classroom.

EXTENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRAINING IN RUSSIA

By contrast with American schools, the Soviet educational system puts great stress on study of foreign languages. According to the U.S. Office of Education, 45 per cent of all secondary school and 65 per cent of all college students in the U.S.S.R. study English, while in the United States only 18 high schools and about one out of ten colleges and universities offered Russian during the 1957-58 term. Every graduate of the Soviet 10-year school,¹⁴ which is comparable to the 12-year program in the United States, has had at least six years of foreign language study. A recent report on Soviet education pointed out that "After the completion of the 10-year school, the Soviet pupil is expected to be able to read a foreign language with correct pronunciation and intonation, to comprehend and summarize what he has read, to understand conversation, to be able to ask and answer questions, express himself grammatically in writing, and read a text of average difficulty with minimal use of a dictionary."¹⁵

English is regarded as the most important foreign language for the Russian student who expects to go to a university. If he does not take English, he will study French, German, Latin, or Spanish. After several years of foreign language study, the pupil is given instruction in other subjects, such as history, mathematics, even physics, in the foreign language. Nearly all college entrance applicants are required to take an examination showing proficiency in at least one foreign language.

On his return from a visit to the U.S.S.R., Commissioner

¹⁴ See "Elite vs. Mass Education," *E.R.R.*, 1958 Vol. I, pp. 354-355.

¹⁵ Mansoor, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.

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Derthick said: "At every turn in our travels we were struck by the emphasis and attention paid to the study of languages in the schools."¹⁶ Seventeen Russian schools were designated during the past year as language schools. Instruction in a foreign tongue begins in those schools in the second grade; and instruction in literature, history and geography is given in the foreign language from the fifth grade on. English is the language in eight of the schools, German in seven, and French in two. Eight secondary schools specialize in the languages and cultures of Asian countries, and experimental instruction in Asian languages has been instituted in some elementary classes.

In addition, the Russians have developed five-year language institutes for graduates of secondary schools. Students are trained there to become teachers, interpreters, and translators. Courses are intensive; For three years students take 20 hours of language and 16 hours of other subjects each week; during the last two years all subjects are taught in the foreign language so that "for six hours a day, six days a week, the students hear, read, and speak only the language they are studying."¹⁷

New Emphasis on Language Instruction

AS KNOWLEDGE of the Soviet Union's concentration on language study began to spread, support for expansion of language courses in American schools gained momentum, and moves toward revision of language teaching methods and goals got under way. The Modern Language Association, with help from the Rockefeller Foundation, initiated a study of the role played by foreign language instruction in American life. Reports based on this study promise to exercise as much influence as did the conclusions of the study conducted by the association in the 1920s. This time, however, the emphasis is on building up language courses, enlarging the number of languages taught, and developing speaking as well as reading skills.

A policy statement issued by the Modern Language Association in 1956 urged that study of foreign languages

¹⁶ Address, National Press Club, Washington, D. C., June 13, 1958.

¹⁷ Mansoor, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

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commence in the elementary school and continue without a break through the 12th grade; that modern equipment like tape recorders be used extensively; and that colleges and universities introduce courses in "the more significant world languages" spoken by the people of the Near East and Central Africa, and by the people of India, Indonesia, China, and Japan.

At a conference on the education of the "academically talented secondary school pupil," called by the National Education Association last February, the section on language study recommended that a minimum continuous sequence of four years of study of a single foreign language be given all gifted pupils in high school—a group which would constitute at least 20 per cent of the student body. It urged that the high school course be integrated so far as possible with preliminary instruction in elementary and junior high grades.

The Modern Language Association has established for language teachers new "minimal, good and superior" standards, which have been endorsed by the American Council for Learned Societies and other educational groups. The standards take into account speaking and aural as well as reading skills, include a knowledge of linguistics and, for the superior teacher, require "an enlightened understanding of the foreign people and their culture." Summer workshops for language teachers have been established in recent years at such educational centers as Purdue University and the Universities of Michigan, Minnesota, Southern Illinois and Washington. But efforts to implement the new goals in language instruction have been hampered by lack of funds, teachers, teaching materials, equipment and, for some languages, even textbooks.

FEDERAL AID TO PROMOTE TEACHING OF LANGUAGES

The Commissioner of Education in March 1957 called a conference of representatives of 20 federal agencies which train or recruit individuals for overseas assignments to sound out their views on how the nation's schools could help meet government needs for qualified personnel. A report on this meeting was sent to selected educators around the country, and they were invited to a second conference to prepare recommendations for a program to meet national needs. Guided by these discussions, the Office of Education prepared a number of proposals for federal

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legislation which eventually found their way into the National Defense Education Act of 1958.

This measure authorized grants to the states of up to \$70 million a year for the four fiscal years, 1959-62, to be matched equally by state funds, for the acquisition of equipment for instruction in modern foreign languages, mathematics, and science. Twelve per cent of the annual appropriations may be used for loans to private schools for this purpose. Another \$5 million was authorized for state supervisory agencies.

The federal government is to pay half the cost of teaching modern foreign languages in some colleges and universities over the four-year period if "individuals trained in such languages are needed by the federal government or by business, industry or education in the United States" and if such instruction is "not readily available." Students may be paid unspecified amounts while taking advanced language training if they plan to teach at the college level or go into some other form of public service. Present and prospective modern language teachers in elementary and secondary schools may be paid \$75 a week, and \$15 for each dependent, while learning how to teach foreign languages with the assistance of modern devices and techniques. The law authorized federal expenditures of \$8 million a year for four years to set up modern language institutes and to pay students at the institutes, and expenditures of \$7,250,000 annually to set up teacher training institutes and pay teachers taking the courses.

The Department of Health, Education and Welfare announced on Sept. 10 that \$15,250,000 had been authorized this year for development of language teaching. A few institutes and language centers were expected to be in operation before the close of the current academic year.

TEACHING OF RUSSIAN IN AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOLS

The booming interest in foreign languages has accounted for three striking innovations in school systems across the country: (1) Introduction of Russian language courses in high schools and of courses in various eastern languages at the college level; (2) initiation of foreign language study in elementary grades; and (3) establishment of language "laboratories" modeled on the intensive study procedures of the armed services' language courses.

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During the 1957-58 term, at least 18 public schools in 11 states, and 14 private schools in seven states and the District of Columbia, gave high school pupils instruction in Russian. An increasing number of inquiries on Russian instruction are coming to the U.S. Office of Education and the number of Russian classes is believed to have increased this term. Two public high schools in Washington, D. C., started classes in Russian for 11th graders when the new term began this autumn.

More schools would follow suit if they had the teachers and knew how to set up Russian courses. A survey early this year found interest in the subject in 13 states.¹⁸ A questionnaire sent to 380 public and private schools in Connecticut showed that four already offered Russian courses, eight planned to start teaching the language soon, and 60 others would do so if they could find teachers. Only one of 200 high schools surveyed in Indiana had classes in Russian, but 40 per cent of the schools indicated a desire to teach the subject, and another 30 per cent expected to offer Russian courses eventually.

A Committee for Promoting the Study of Russian in High Schools was organized in September 1957 at the annual convention of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages. This group helps to assemble teaching materials, sponsors "pilot programs," and attempts to dispel the prevalent fear that Russian is too difficult a language for the average American to tackle. It points out that Russian is an Indo-European, not an Oriental language, that more than half of the letters in its alphabet are familiar Latin symbols, and that Russian spelling is phonetic.

Russian is now taught at 183 colleges and universities in the United States. A number of the institutions offer special summer courses in Russian. A few, including Brooklyn College, Columbia University, Middlebury College in Vermont, and the University of Minnesota, have recently initiated Russian teacher training programs. Twenty-nine American colleges offer instruction in Chinese, 23 in Arabic, 22 in Japanese, and eight in Persian and Turkish. There are seven American colleges which have courses in Korean, six in Hindi, five in Indonesian and Ukrainian, and two in Burmese.

¹⁸ Helen B. Yakobson, *The Study of Russian in American High Schools* (mimeo.), May 20, 1958.

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Foreign language instruction has been given in the elementary grades of a few school systems for several decades,¹⁹ but teaching of languages in primary schools did not catch on in a large way until Earl J. McGrath, then U.S. Commissioner of Education, advocated such instruction before a meeting of language teachers in 1952. Favorable response to his plea led to a National Conference on the Role of Foreign Languages in American Schools, held in Washington in January 1953, at which McGrath's proposal won general endorsement. Teaching of foreign languages to grade schoolers is widely accepted today by the educational profession and by parents. An estimated 300,000 pupils in American elementary schools are now receiving language instruction.

Childhood is considered the ideal time to become familiar with the sounds and forms of a foreign language. The child is imitative and readily catches on to the sound and meaning of a foreign tongue. "A child who begins early to learn a foreign language can learn to speak it without accent and master it in its complex aspects in a way which is difficult for an adolescent."²⁰ Some educators think the earlier language instruction begins, the better. European schools usually start with the fifth grade, but a few American schools start with the first. A special advisory committee appointed by New York State education authorities concluded last August that "Foreign-language teaching should begin as soon as children come to school."

Educators agree that language study in grade schools should be purely oral at first, with no stress on rules of grammar. Reading would be introduced about midway in the elementary grades. Children who learn a language in this way will possess the basic grounding for later study of grammar, and eventually study of the literature and culture of a foreign country in its own language.

NEW METHODS IN TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Educators are looking to new laboratory techniques for a tremendous improvement in the attainments of language

¹⁹ Cleveland initiated such courses in the early 1920s. French and Spanish have been taught to selected pupils in a Brooklyn elementary school since 1931, and similar programs have been carried on for some years in El Paso, Los Angeles, San Diego, and at Somerville, N. J.

²⁰ Theodore Anderson, *The Teaching of Foreign Languages in the Elementary School* (1953), p. 12.

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students in school and college. The primary purpose of language laboratories is to develop the ability to speak a language accurately and with some fluency and to understand it when spoken by others.

The essential items of a language laboratory are the tape recorder and the phonograph. The usual laboratory has soundproof student booths, each equipped with headsets through which the students listen to tape or disc recordings. The recording carries instruction material directly related to classroom work. Usually the recording includes periodic pauses during which the student repeats aloud what he has heard. The record carrying both the instructor's and the student's voice may be played back to check on the accuracy of the student's responses.

An Office of Education survey last year showed that 209 colleges and universities in 41 states and territories, and 47 secondary schools in 20 states and the District of Columbia, had language laboratories. The laboratories were used most frequently for French, Spanish, and German but a laboratory was available somewhere for as many as 40 different languages, including such rarely taught tongues as Hausa (spoken in Central Africa), Icelandic, and Serbo-Croatian.

The laboratories are expected to compensate to a considerable degree for the shortage of language teachers. Teachers who have learned to use the equipment are almost universally enthusiastic. Comments gathered by the Office of Education noted that it relieves teachers of much aural-oral drill, saves class time, aids in developing correct pronunciation, and enables students to understand normal speech in a foreign tongue almost at once.

